

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
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FM AMEMBASSY LIMA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7367
INFO AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
AMEMBASSY QUITO
AMEMBASSY LAPAZ
AMEMBASSY GUAYAQUIL

C O N F I D E N T I A L LIMA 9629

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PBOR PE EC
SUBJ: ECUADORIAN ACCESS TO THE AMAZON

REF: (A) QUITO 7475, (B) STATE 261696 (NOTAL)

1. DURING A MEETING WITH ME ON NOVEMBER 3 THE FOREIGN MINISTER ESSENTIALLY CONFIRMED THE STATUS REPORT AYALA GAVE AMB BLOOMFIELD (REF A). DE LA PUENTE SAID THAT THERE WILL SHORTLY BE AN EXCHANGE OF NOTES PROVIDING FOR NEGOTIATIONS ON THE BORDER DEMARCATION AND ON ECUADOREAN ACCESS TO THE AMAZON. THESE WILL BE CONDUCTED ON THE PERUVIAN SIDE BY THE MINISTRY'S SECRETARY GENERAL, AMB JULIO EGO AGUIRRE ALVAREZ. THE NOTES WILL PROVIDE FOR ALTERNATING PERUVIAN AND ECUADOREAN VENUES.

2. I ASKED DE LA PUENTE WHAT HIS UNDERSTANDING WAS OF WHAT THE ECUADOREANS WANTED. HE SAID THEY SEEK SOVEREIGN ACCESS TO THE MARANON AND CAN BE SATISFIED BY NOTHING LESS, NOTING THAT A SOLUTION BASED ON THE NAPO OR THE PASTAZA WOULD NOT BE ACCEPTABLE IN QUITO.
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THE MINISTER SAID HE STAYS AWAKE NIGHTS WORRYING ABOUT THIS PROBLEM. HIS VIEW IS THAT PERU SHOULD GIVE ECUADOR A STRIP OF LAND (FRANJA) OUT TO THE MARANON. BUT, HE ADDED, IF THAT OFFER WERE MADE, THE GOE WOULD DEMAND MORE. THEY WANT A QUOTE ZONE UNQUOTE, DE LA PUENTE SAID.

3. THE MINISTER WENT ON TO NOTE THE DIFFICULTIES HE FACES: THE AREA IS QUOTE FULL OF PETROLEUM UNQUOTE; THE GOVERNMENT IN QUITO IS IN A STATE OF TRANSITION -- THE POLITICIANS THERE ARE COMING TO THE FORE AND WILL POLITICIZE THE ISSUE; AND, MOST CRITICALLY, A SOLUTION MUST BE SOLD TO THE PERUVIAN MILITARY. DE LA PUENTE COMMENTED IN THAT CONTEXT ON THE EXTREME DIFFICULTY HE HAD ENCOUNTERED IN PERSUADING THE HIGH COMMAND TO PERMIT THE GOP TO MAKE ITS COUNTER OFFER ON THE BOLIVIAN CORRIDOR TO THE SEA. HE SAID HIS QUOTE INTUITION UNQTE TOLD HIM THAT THE PRESIDENT WOULD SUPPORT A REASONABLE SOLUTION, BUT THE COMMANDERS-IN-CHIEF COULD BE WORSE THAN ANY PARLIAMENT.

4. DE LA PUENTE SAID HIS ARGUMENT WOULD BE THAT A FINAL SETTLEMENT WITH ECUADOR WOULD RID PERU OF ITS NORTHERN QUOTE FRONT UNQTE. HE ADDED THAT, OF COURSE, PERU WANTS PEACE BOTH IN THE NORTH AND THE SOUTH. THE MINISTER REITERATED SEVERAL TIMES THAT HE WAS PREPARED TO MAKE THE EFFORT WITH THE MILITARY. I EXPRESSED MY GRATIFICATION AND NOTED PRESIDENT CARTER'S INTEREST.

5. DE LA PUENTE CHARACTERIZED THAT INTEREST AS COMMENDABLY QUOTE AMERICANISTA UNQTE. BUT, HE OBSERVED, WE WOULD RECALL THAT MORALES BERMUDEZ IN HIS MEETINGS WITH PRESIDENT CARTER, MRS. CARTER AND THE CONGRESSIONAL CONFIDENTIAL

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DELEGATIONS HAD RAISED ONLY QUOTE PERUVIAN UNQTE SUBJECTS. IT WAS ECUADOR AND CHILE THAT BROUGHT UP THESE OTHER PROBLEMS WITH US. I SAID OUR INTEREST IS IN PEACE AND COOPERATION IN THIS REGION; WE TAKE NO SIDES AND ADVOCATE NO PARTICULAR SOLUTIONS. DE LA PUENTE SAID HE UNDERSTOOD AND DID APPRECIATE OUR PRESIDENT'S CONSTRUCTIVE INTEREST.

6. COMMENT: THE MINISTER'S FORCEFUL PRESENTATION OF HIS CASE FOR A SETTLEMENT WITH ECUADOR SURPRISED ME. I THINK I HAVE MISJUDGED HIM, THAT HE IS SINCERE ABOUT SEEKING A REAL SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM WITH ECUADOR AND IS WILLING TO TAKE SUBSTANTIAL POLITICAL RISKS IN THE PROCESS. I REMAIN SKEPTICAL THAT A TERRITORIAL CONCESSION OF ANY SUBSTANCE CAN ULTIMATELY BE SOLD HERE, BUT I COULD BE WRONG AND WILL BE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR WAYS WE MIGHT FURTHER USEFULLY SUPPORT THIS EFFORT.

7. DE LA PUENTE'S COMPLAINT ABOUT THE ECUADOREANS AND CHILEANS TAKING THEIR TROUBLES TO US ECHOES SIMILAR REMARKS WE HAVE HEARD FROM MORALES BERMUDEZ AND PRIME

MINISTER ARBULU. THE IMPRESSION HERE IS THAT THE
NEIGHBORS HAVE BEEN BAD-MOUTHING PERU AND SEEKING TO
ENLIST US ON THEIR SIDE AGAINST THIS COUNTRY. DE LA
PUENTE RECOGNIZES -- AND SAID SO TO ME YESTERDAY --
THAT THE ROOT OF THE PROBLEM IS THE PERUVIAN MILITARY
BUILDUP. BUT THE GENERALS HE WORKS FOR ARE LESS
SOPHISTICATED, MORE DEFENSIVE AND BY NATURE SUSPICIOUS.
WITH THESE CONSIDERATIONS IN MIND, I HOPE WE WILL BE
CAREFUL TO MAINTAIN AN EVEN-HANDED APPROACH AND TO AVOID
ANY APPEARANCE OF MESSAGE-CARRYING OR OTHER INTER-
MEDIARY ACTIVITY. WE WOULD NOT WANT UNWITTINGLY TO
ENCOURAGE PERUVIAN IRRATIONALITY OR OTHERWISE JEOPAR-
DIZE DE LA PUENTE'S EFFORT.

8. I WILL REPORT SEPARATELY ON WHAT THE FOREIGN
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MINISTER HAD TO SAY ABOUT ARMS AND BOLIVIAN ACCESS
TO THE SEA.
SHLAUDEMAM

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NNN

*** Current Handling Restrictions *** n/a

*** Current Classification *** CONFIDENTIAL

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